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## **County Partners with City Net for Santa Ana River Flood Control Channel Homeless Engagement Initiative**

**Santa Ana, CA** — Starting July 1, 2017, the County of Orange began a partnership with the nonprofit City Net for directed supplemental engagement services for individuals experiencing homelessness encamped along the Santa Ana River flood control channel.

The Orange County Board of Supervisors approved \$750,000 on June 6, 2017, for the County to provide enhanced services to the encamped homeless population between Chapman Avenue and Katella Avenue. The Board identified the greatest areas of need to include services like triage operations, intensive case management, and links to both transitional and permanent supportive housing. The County entered into a sole source contract with City Net as the service provider and began a six-month pilot project initiative focusing on the encampment area along the west side of the Santa Ana River flood control channel from Chapman Avenue in the city of Orange to Katella Avenue in the city of Anaheim. The cost of the contract is \$720,000, and \$30,000 is allocated for County expenses related to the initiative.

“The County is redoubling its efforts to help homeless individuals with this initiative,” said Vice Chair Andrew Do, First District Supervisor. “By expanding our existing resource teams with the nonprofit agency City Net, we will be linking these individuals to available residential programs.”

The initiative will provide a geographically focused and daily coordinated campaign of outreach efforts that will result in verifiable connections to housing resources. By utilizing new and existing resources throughout the County, the project will assist individuals experiencing homelessness and set them on a path that leads toward housing stability. City Net will begin by conducting a homeless neighbor census along with a service needs and resource assessment to determine the scope of the project and improve responses to meet the diverse needs of those inhabiting these areas.

“Our duty is to promote safety, improve access to available resources, mitigate impacts related to this area encampment and end the use of the flood control channel as a place to reside,” said Supervisor Todd Spitzer, Third District. “A flood control channel is not a safe place to live, and the County intends to close the riverbed to this unauthorized use.”

Once the census and needs assessment are completed, the initiative will align with the Orange County Continuum of Care and will provide documentation as individuals leave the flood control channel and accept available resources. The goal of the initiative is to engage all individuals encamped in the area with case management activities and coordinate 10-15 connections to housing resources per month through collaborative case management. The City Net contract includes three full-time Collaborative Case Manager/Housing Navigators and two full-time Community Resource Mobilizers.

“Homelessness in Orange County and across the nation has reached crisis levels,” said Chairwoman Michelle Steel, Second District Supervisor. “We as a County must address this issue in an effective and collaborative way as we implement this initiative. To continue to see change in homelessness in Orange County, engagement with the cities will be essential.”

As part of the initiative, City Net will employ Illumination Foundation as a sub-contractor to provide five full-time staff dedicated to outreach case management, housing navigation, substance abuse counseling, behavioral health therapy and peer specialization. Illumination Foundation will leverage existing Permanent Supportive Housing grants through Continuum of Care funding to provide access to permanent housing options for the individuals encamped along the flood control channel.

“The County is doing its due diligence to provide services to those who truly want help,” said Supervisor Shawn Nelson, Fourth District. “We realize not everyone will accept the resources available, but are committed to reaching out, building relationships and making as many connections to those resources as possible.”

The Board also directed the County’s Health Care Agency (HCA) to include \$5 million in funding from the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) to be directed to permanent supportive housing solutions. The Board will approve those funds as part of the MHSA funding plan in August 2017.

“We need to continue to build our base of permanent supportive housing in Orange County,” said Supervisor Lisa Bartlett, Fifth District. “Without affordable housing options at the end of the day, we will fall into a vicious cycle of homelessness recidivism. Housing is a critical component to solving homelessness.”

In addition to the initiative, basic necessities including hydration stations and mobile showers will be available in proximity to the flood control channel. Placement of portable restrooms proximate to the flood control channel continues to be evaluated as part of the initiative. The ultimate goal of the initiative is to relocate individuals to more appropriate housing.

To learn how the County is working with cities and community-based organizations to build a system of care to continually improve the countywide response to homelessness, visit the County of Orange’s website at [www.ocgov.com/homelessness](http://www.ocgov.com/homelessness).

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